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NEWS

Winchester Center Station on track to fully re-open this spring

CHRIS STEVENS | CORRESPONDENT

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On Jan. 14, the Quill Rotary in downtown Winchester was partially closed for continued work to the Winchester MBTA station. COURTESY PHOTO/RICHARD ROHAN

After nearly a year of delays, MBTA officials say the Winchester C
Commuter Rail Station is on track to fully open this spring.

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"We are 11 months over schedule right now. We were supposed to be done last February," said Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Senior Project Manager Nathan Rae. "We understand, obviously, that we're late, and we want to finish the project, too."

A rendering of what the new Winchester Center Station will look like. COURTESY PHOTO/MBTA

Rae gave the 30-plus community members who signed onto Zoom Jan. 22 an update on the project that will ultimately result in the complete renovation of the Winchester Center station.

Due to safety concerns, the station was closed for repairs in 2021. The station had not had a major update since the 1950s.

Schedule impacts

The station partially re-opened in October and was expected to fully open in December 2024, which did not happen.

"We were excited and eager that commuter rail service could return to Winchester Center," Rae said.

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Signs around the Winchester Center Station project. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/SHUKONG OU

But focusing labor on the partial re-opening resulted in some activities on the north half of the station falling behind schedule, he said. Plus some of the remaining work has to be done in warmer temperatures, he added. While workers can install platform sections and even pour concrete in the cold, Rae said the concrete finishing, painting and sealants have to be done in warmer weather.

Rae added the reality is crews are also working next to a live track, where there is other work going on.

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MBTA crews start work on the Winchester Center Station in 2021. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/SHUKONG OU

Along with renovating the station, Rae said there is continued maintenance work up and down the Lowell line as well as some neighboring routes. Often, when there is work on a neighboring line, trains will be rerouted onto the Lowell line, causing work slowdowns, he explained.

“When you have more traffic going through the station limits, there’s less access to the tracks,” he said.

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What’s left?

Fully re-opening means a full platform re-opening at the north end of the station, the final elevator will be open and Laraway Road will not only be re-opened, but will be milled, repaved and striped. That work will include everything from plumbing and conduits that supply power to the platform to lighting, cameras and scrolling signs to benches, ramps and signage.

“Then what we call a punch list, or deficiency list, work will be continuing after the station opening,” Rae added.

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Winchester residents said they were concerned the rusty bridge would not be painted as part of the MBTA station project downtown. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/SHUKONG OU

Concerns

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Resident David Anderson wanted to know what color the bridge would be painted and if the abutments would also be cleaned up and/or painted, but Rae disappointed him when he said it wasn't in the budget.

Rae said plans to paint were cut from the project early on in a drive to stick to the $50 million budget, which, he said, they have.

"Wow," Anderson said. "That's concerning."

Anderson said a basic, fundamental aspect of finishing a project is to leave the site clean and leaving the already rusty steel and stained abutments is a black eye on the entire project. He said painting seemed like pretty short money relative to the overall cost of the project and he hoped it would be something they would revisit.

MBTA work crews started working on the Winchester station in 2021, with the aim of finishing the project by the end of December 2024. The project is now scheduled to finish spring 2025. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/SHUKONG OU

As president of the Boston Chapter of the Hearing Loss Association of America, Kerry Sullivan wondered what T officials were doing to aid those suffering from hearing loss.

Rae said scrolling message boards both on the platforms and inside the trains were standard.

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And Christopher Silvia asked if the construction had impacted the train schedules.

Rae said there is a construction schedule where train service is reduced midday and the plan is to lift that schedule as soon as the final projects are completed in the spring.

One other resident wondered who would clean the glass elevators. Rae said that is on the MBTA since it's part of its scope of operations.

Work goes on at the Winchester Center Station, which is scheduled to end spring 2025. FILE PHOTO

Rae said despite the work that still needs to be completed, he is confident the station will reopen in the spring.

"We believe that the schedule is doable," he said. "Of course, there' things that aren't in our control, but we believe that the plan that

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to complete the remaining activities is going to get us to the place we need to be by spring."

If anyone has any questions or concerns, Rae said they can call the project hotline at 781-218-9717, or email them at winchesterstation@MBTA.com and they can follow the project's progress at the project website.

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By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester

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The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On

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Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

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